

Chapter 11

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Chapter 11

Parks, Recreation & Open Space

Outdoor recreation contributes to both the physical fitness and mental well-being of County residents, workers, and visitors. Recreation sites, facilities and open space are important components of Charles County's quality of life. The continued acquisition and development of outdoor recreation sites and facilities, in line with growing population, are necessary to meet future demands.

The format of this chapter is significantly different from the chapter in the 1990 and 1997 Comprehensive Plans. Since the advent of Maryland's Program Open Space law in 1969 counties have had to submit a Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (LPRP) to the State every five years. In 2003 the Maryland Departments of Planning and Natural Resources issued new guidelines for these plans that differ significantly from past guidelines. Some of the notable changes are:

- The next round of local plans are due in 2005, and the next State Plan is due in 2006. Charles County began preparing its plan in late 2004.
- Updates of County plans are now required every six years rather than every five, to better correspond to the frequency of comprehensive plan updates.
- The State and local plans are to be called Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plans (LPPRP) to better reflect these changes in the process.
- LPPRPs are to be adopted by counties as amendments to their Comprehensive Plans.

In view of these changes, and especially the one requiring the LPPRP to be an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, Charles County has decided to use this Chapter to set forth the County's comprehensive planning goals, objectives and policy considerations for recreation and open space. All other data, analyses, and recommendations for parks, recreation, and land preservation are in the LPPRP.

Goals & objectives

Charles County's goals for recreation and open space are:

- 11.1 Create a physical and social environment which accommodates the recreational needs and interests of all County residents.
- 11.2 Seek to provide 30 acres of parks, recreation and open space land per 1,000 population, consistent with State goals.
- 11.3 Provide a range of leisure, recreational and cultural programs and facilities that are accessible and affordable to all County residents.
- 11.4 Develop a high-quality public parks and recreation system with adequate space and facilities, providing an appropriate mix of recreation activities for County residents.
- 11.5 Maintain a high quality and cost-effective maintenance program for all County parks, open space areas, and recreational facilities.
- 11.6 Establish an interconnected on-road and off-road trail system for use by hikers, equestrians, nature viewers, and bicyclists.

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To achieve the above goals the following objectives are established:

- 11.i Identify funding sources to support land acquisition and recreation facility development needs.
- 11.ii Continue to pursue land acquisitions for parks and recreational facilities. A specific objective is to acquire land for a community park and a multi-purpose regional park west of US 301, as identified in the Waldorf Sub-Area plan.
- 11.iii Enhance waterfront access and recreation opportunities. Encouraging recreational use of the Potomac River and its tributaries, by providing public access points is a special County objective.
- 11.iv Develop off-road recreational trail corridors particularly in stream corridors, along former rail lines, and on suitable County and State roads.
- 11.v Increase community involvement and participation in the use of recreation land and in the implementation of quality recreation programs.
- 11.vi Pay special attention to providing a variety of recreation opportunities for the County's youth to provide options for healthy and safe use of leisure time, and opportunities for growth in self esteem.
- 11.vii Work towards implementation of the proposed open space network identified in the Waldorf Sub-Area Plan. That plan envisions creating an extensive open space network primarily along the major stream corridors that run through the Sub-Area (see Figure 3-12 of that plan). Only portions of this open space would be open to the public, though there would be some opportunities for trail connections.
- 11.viii Reexamine current requirements for the dedication of land through the development process and consider alternatives including a fee-in-lieu of land to address a portion of the park and recreation impacts created by development.

Policy Considerations

The following policies shall be used in working toward the implementation of the goals and objectives identified in this Plan.

- a. In addition to guidelines contained in the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, the County will rely on the professional knowledge and judgment of County staff to determine demand for current and future recreation and open space facilities and programs.
- b. To meet future recreational needs, the County will consider all opportunities to coordinate the planning and cooperative use potential of new community facilities in order to reduce unnecessary and costly duplication of services.
- c. To assure adequate public access to the waterfront, the County will consider increased demands and ensure sufficient land for marinas and boat landings is set aside through zoning requirements and park acquisitions. The County will not rely solely on private waterfront developers to provide these facilities.
- d. Seek dedications and contributions by private developers to meet public open space and recreation needs

- e. The County will, as part of the recreation and open space dedication requirements for new developments, seek to acquire rights-of-way, open spaces, and trails to support the County's planned interconnected trail system.
- f. Charles County will coordinate land preservation and open space acquisition with natural resource protection considerations.
- g. Charles County will focus its acquisition and development efforts on larger countywide, regional, and community parks. The County will use the development process to obtain dedications of land for smaller neighborhood-serving facilities.
- h. Charles County will, to the extent possible, seek to acquire park land in high growth areas, convenient to population centers to satisfy future anticipated recreation demand.
- i. In selected urban areas the County will seek to create spaces, plazas, and pocket parks, in support of the County's Sub-Area plans.
- j. The County will support private commercial interests that provide recreation opportunities such as sports complexes, marinas, and hunting areas that expand recreation opportunities in the County.
- k. Charles County will seek to meet the needs of special populations including the disabled in developing recreational facilities.
- l. Charles County will work cooperatively with the Towns of Indian Head and La Plata to coordinate the provision of parks, recreation, and open space land and facilities.
- m. Charles County will continue to work cooperatively with the Charles County Public Schools to coordinate development of recreation facilities at County schools and institute cooperative use agreements.